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INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0255
RUEHLC/AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE 0969
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON 0809
RUEHLU/AMEMBASSY LUANDA 0431
RUEHTO/AMEMBASSY MAPUTO 0472
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 0720
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAKAR 001822

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/31/2017
TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PU](#)
SUBJECT: GUINEA BISSAU: BIG DRUG ARRESTS SHOW POLICE
WILLINGNESS

REF: DAKAR 1751

Classified By: Charge Jay T. Smith for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

11. (C) Recent police and military actions to fight drug trafficking have helped strengthen Guinea-Bissau's claims it wants to do more. The former head of the Judicial Police (JP) credited U.S. pressure with forcing the GOGB to take action. The new head of the JP appears to be an interested and capable partner, if not over her head. In response, post has determined now is the time to provide material and moral support to the JP. End Summary.

NIGERIANS AND COLOMBIANS IN "JAIL"

12. (C) Post reported in reftel the GOGB was organizing itself to fight drug trafficking and now there is evidence that decision extends to the operational level as well. Former JP Chief Orlando da Silva told Poloff August 28 the GOGB is surprised and frightened by the tough and persistent U.S. diplomatic pressure to fight drug trafficking and that is largely why new measures are being taken. He cited a diplomatic note from post to the GOGB expressing concern over his firing and noting that our assistance is dependent upon reliable partners in the police. The diplomatic note was leaked by a member of the GOGB and got wide press play in West Africa and Europe, a fact which da Silva said frankly and without exaggeration kept him alive. Da Silva went on to say he believed Justice Minister Carmelita Pires and the new JP Chief Lucinda Barosa Aukharie are dedicated and competent, but they will receive no real help from the rest of the government.

13. (C) The JP under Aukharie has conducted two counter-drug operations with little government support and no additional material. Aukharie showed Poloff on August 28 five kilos of cocaine that was apprehended from a group of ten Nigerians on August 22, all of whom were in custody. Some of the cocaine had been wrapped in capsules for swallowing. In addition to the cocaine was small amounts of marijuana which Aukharie said is now being grown near the eastern city of Gabu. She

noted marijuana production was previously unknown in Guinea-Bissau and it was probably for local consumption, not export.

14. (C) The second operation netted two Colombians who were arrested on suspicion of drug trafficking. No drugs were found in the business where they were apprehended -- a construction company called SOMECE owned by Portuguese national Dr. Pedro Ortega. However, ammunition, explosives, a pistol, an AK-47 rifle, 94,500 Euros, two luxury vehicles, and documents were seized in the August 18 raid. Luis Fernando Arango Mejia (DPOB 3-10-69, Colombia) and Juan Pablo Rubio Camacho (DPOB 3-18-66, Bogota, Colombia) were apprehended and were being held at a JP holding cell despite pressure by some high-level government officials to release them. A third, Mauricio Arango Mejia (DPOB 12-19-66 Buga Valle, Colombia) was said to be in Portugal even though his passport was found at the site. JP provided photos and fingerprints to LEGATT who coordinated with Interpol to travel to Bissau September 1 to follow the case. (NOTE: LEGATT reported Rubio was released immediately after his trip and Arango would likely be released soon).

15. (C) Chief of the Armed Forces General Batista Tagme Na Waie is also getting on the anti-narcotics bandwagon. He directed the seizure of 40 barrels of propeller airplane fuel from the airstrip on the island of Bubaque which he claimed was for refueling drug flights. Thirty more empty barrels were found at the site that is also a commercial airstrip. He initiated the operation on his own and then was compelled to invite Judicial Police to participate after the Justice Minister argued the JP had primacy in the fight on drug trafficking. No drugs or traffickers were apprehended.

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Tagme, who has allowed his staff and associates to traffic with impunity if not benefitted outright, followed this sudden reversal with a press statement on August 29 that he would shoot down any airplane suspected of trafficking drugs. He said Star-2 surface-to-air missiles had already been set up all around the country, including the islands, and planes flying without proper authorization would be downed.

COMMENT

16. (C) Agencies with counter-drug responsibilities (LEGATT, ODC, DAO, POL, RAO) met with Charge August 29 and decided now was the time to provide support to those in the JP whose performance have indicated they may be capable and credible partners. The primary goals are to build organizational capacity and bolster their efforts by demonstrating U.S. commitment. Post will provide a small package of requested assistance to the JP and monitor progress before providing more. Partners in EUCOM and DEA will be instrumental in identifying potential resources.

17. (C) Not all of the recent anti-drug bluster is to be believed: Navy Chief Jose Americo "Bubu" Na Tchuto was on the cover of a national newspaper in August saying he is fighting drug trafficking and Interior Minister Baciro Dabo also talks regularly about what he is doing to fight the scourge. It is interesting, however, that even two of the best known kingpins feel the pressure to put up appearances. Tagme's threat to shoot down planes may be bluster as well, but more likely it is a message to traffickers that they can no longer operate so brazenly.

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